The Meteorological Office

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Transco Signs Weather Forecast Contract with The Met. Office

Transco has just signed a new five year contract with The Met. Office for detailed weather forecast information. This new contract will enable Transco, Britain's gas distributor, to improve demand forecasting, save money and ultimately, improve the services offered to customers.

Chris Giles, senior operations engineer of forecasting and modelling at Transco, said: "Our operations are extremely weather-sensitive therefore accurate weather forecasting is critical. For example, if the weather is one degree Celsius colder than normal, gas demand can rise as much as four percent, making a huge difference to our business. This June has been cooler than usual, and through accurate Met. Office forecasts we have been able to anticipate our suppliers' demands."

For operational efficiency Transco must be able to nominate how much gas will go through the UK system per day. The Met. Office has developed a tailored solution for Transco, with weather forecasts designed to fit Transco's gas demand models.

The Met. Office feeds forecasts directly into Transco's specialised computer system which collects weather data, and indicates how much gas is needed the next day. Combined with general weather information (such as wind direction) supplied to them by fax, Transco can order gas for thirteen local distribution zones across the UK.

The gas models also function as triggers in severe weather conditions, reducing the disruption caused by operational breakdowns. For instance, if extremely cold temperatures (minus four degrees Celsius or less) are forecast, weather data fed into Transco's gas models trigger a warning which sends engineers out to sites to prepare for any potential problems.

In addition to Transco's customised weather solution, The Met. Office has developed tailored weather services for all types of utilities such as water, communications, gas, and electricity companies.

Barbara Richardson, senior account manager of energy services at The Met. Office, says: "Utility companies are particularly weather-sensitive as customer demand is highly dependent on temperature and other meteorological conditions. The Met. Office works with a wide range of utility companies to provide solutions to enable them to maximise efficiency and provide significant cost savings."

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Notes:

- The Met. Office provides services in more than 170 countries worldwide.
- The Met. Office works with utility companies to develop sophisticated models based on weather trend analysis.